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Application Serial No. 10/748,968

Amendment to the Claims

1. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for surveying a user with a tailored sequence of questions, comprising the steps of:

5       presenting a segment of the sequence of questions to said user, the user answers to said segment determining, regardless of the sequence of the presented questions, an affinity of said user to at least one or more affinity groups, wherein each affinity group comprises a plurality of profiles;

          creating a profile for said user if a profile does not exist for said user, otherwise  
10       accessing an existing profile for said user, and ~~or~~ adding said segment of questions and corresponding answers to said user profile;

determining if a corresponding affinity group exists for said user profile and, if so,  
          associating said user profile with at least one or more affinity groups, based on said  
          user's profile questions and corresponding answers, regardless of the order in which  
15       questions were presented, if an appropriate affinity group does not exist, then otherwise  
          creating at least one new affinity group, said at least one new affinity group created by  
          associating at least one user profile, including said user profile with each other, based  
          on answers to questions provided in said user profiles and regardless of the order in  
          which the questions were presented with said new affinity group;

20       ~~causing~~ presenting a particular subsequent segment of said sequence of questions to said user, the selection of said subsequent segment to be influenced by  
          ~~answer received to previously presented questions in said sequence of questions and a~~  
          particular affinity group or combination of affinity groups to which said user profile is  
          associated by said method;

25       repeating the steps above until all possible questions of said sequence of questions have been presented to and answered by said user; and

          storing said user profile;

          at least one of the questions being pertinent to at least one of compensation,  
          benefits, wages, and economic analysis.

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2. (currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said at least one question from said collection ~~segment of a sequence~~ of questions is comprised of a set comprising at least one question group that forms a logical grouping of question fields into a single record.

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3. ( cancelled)

4. (currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said at least one particular subsequent questions from said collection ~~segment of said sequence~~ of questions is presented because of at least one of:

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popularity of said subsequent questions ~~segment~~ within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

as a most frequently answered subsequent question ~~segment~~ within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

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as a most recently answered subsequent question ~~segment~~ within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and

with regard to a defined relation to said at least one question ~~a segment~~ that was presented prior to said subsequent question ~~segment~~.

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5. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one question is capable of receiving an answer that comprises an open text.

6. (previously presented) The method of Claim 5, wherein said open text allows said user to add a new answer value for said question.

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7. (previously presented) The method of Claim 6, wherein said new answer is used as one of a plurality of possible answers to said question when said question is subsequently posed to a second user.

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8. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein a question comprises at least two possible answers.

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9. (original) The method of Claim 8, wherein said user may select more than one answer to said question.

5 10. (currently amended) The method of Claim 8, wherein said at least two possible answers are presented because of at least one of:

popularity of an answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

as a defined relation to said at least one question;

10 as a most frequent answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and

as a most recent answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups.

15 11. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein said method further comprises the step of:

filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application of a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of predefined criteria.

20 12. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering step is performed in at least one of:

real-time; and

batch mode.

25 13. (currently amended) The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering step further comprises the step of:

modifying an answer to said question based on at least one of:

predetermined criterion;

at least one filtering rule;

30 consistency with previously answered questions;

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consistency with all answered questions; and  
consistency with answers of said particular affinity group or combination  
of said affinity groups.

5 14. (previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein said modification comprises  
at least one of omission of said answer, and tagging said user profile as inactive.

15. (currently amended) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
periodically creating a new affinity group; and by associating at least one user to  
10 said new affinity group.

16. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:  
a user creating a new affinity group.

15 17. (original) The method of Claim 16, further comprising the step of:  
associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

18. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:  
20 providing a report.

19. (original) The method of Claim 18, wherein generation of said report is constrained  
by at least one of:  
an attribute of said user profile; and  
25 a reporting goal.

20. (original) The method of Claim 19, wherein said goal comprises at least one of:  
a profile attribute value;  
a range of profile attribute values;  
30 a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;  
a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;

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a date range;  
a minimum count of matching profiles;  
a maximum count of matching profiles;  
a question filter;  
5 an affinity filter; and  
a match score threshold.

21. (original) The method of Claim 19, further comprising the step of:  
weighting said constraints to provide a match score.

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22. (previously presented) The method of Claim 19, said step of providing said report  
comprising the steps of:

matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding  
matchfield of at least one of an affinity group and a user profile, and  
15 generating a match score.

23. (original) The method of Claim 22, further comprising the step of:  
determining at least one best match from a plurality of possible matches.

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24. (original) The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:  
arranging matches by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least  
two levels of matches, based on said score.

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25. (original) The method of Claim 22, said step of matching further comprising the step  
of:  
providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and  
weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

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26. (previously presented) The method of Claim 24, said step of matching further  
comprising the step of:  
classifying each match score as one of:

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deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

27. (original) The method of Claim 19, wherein said goal is any of:

5       a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs  
pertaining to personal aspirations; and

an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary  
inputs.

10   28. (original) The method of Claim 27, wherein said aggregated information comprises  
statistical information.

29. (original) The method of Claim 27, wherein a report resulting from a personal goal  
comprises:

15       a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:  
a plurality of user profiles; and  
an affinity group.

20   30. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for performing a  
compensation survey of a user with a user tailored series sequence of questions,  
comprising the steps of:

presenting at least one question from a collection ~~a segment of the sequence~~ of  
questions to said user, the user answers to said at least one question segment  
determining regardless of the order in which questions are presented, an affinity of said  
25   user to compensation within an one or more affinity group, wherein each affinity group  
comprises a plurality of profiles, each of said profiles comprising a plurality of segments  
of questions and corresponding answers;

creating a user profile for said user if a profile does not exist for said user,  
otherwise accessing an existing profile for said user, and ~~or~~ adding said at least one  
30   question ~~segment of questions~~ and corresponding answers to said user profile;



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determining if a corresponding affinity group exists for said user profile and, if so associating said user profile with at least one or more existing affinity groups, based on user's profile questions and corresponding answers, regardless of the order in which questions are presented, ; if an appropriate affinity group does not exist, then otherwise  
5 creating at least one new affinity group, said new affinity group created by associating a plurality of user profiles that include said user profile with each other, based on answers to questions provided in said user profiles and regardless of the order in which the questions are presented with said new affinity group;

causing presenting a at least one particular subsequent question from segment  
10 of said collection sequence of questions to said user, the selection of said at least one subsequent question segment to be being influenced and dynamically determined by answer received to previously presented questions in said sequence of questions and a particular affinity group or combination of affinity groups with to which said user profile is associated by said method;

15 repeating the steps above until all appropriate possible questions of said collection sequence of questions have been presented to and answered by said user;  
and

storing said user profile.

20 31. (currently amended) The method of Claim 30, wherein at least one question from said collection a segment of a sequence of questions is comprised of a set comprising at least one question group forming a logical grouping of question fields into a single record.

25 32. (cancelled)

30 33. (currently amended) The method of Claim 30, wherein said at least one particular subsequent question from said collection segment of said sequence of questions is presented because of at least one of:

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popularity of said subsequent question segment within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

as a most frequently answered subsequent question segment within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

5 as a most recently answered subsequent question segment within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and

with regard to a defined relation to said at least one question—a segment.

10 34. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein at least one question is capable of receiving an answer that comprises an open text.

35. (previously presented) The method of Claim 34, wherein said open text allows said user to add a new answer value to said at least one question.

15 36. (previously presented) The method of Claim 35, wherein said new answer is used as one of a plurality of possible answers to said question when said question is subsequently posed to a second user.

20 37. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein a question comprises at least two possible answers.

38. (original) The method of Claim 37, wherein said user may select more than one answer to said question.

25 39. (currently amended) The method of Claim 37, wherein said at least two possible answers are presented because of at least one of:

popularity of an answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

as a defined relation to said at least one question;

30 as a most frequent answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and



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as a most recent answer within said particular affinity group or combination of  
said affinity groups.

40. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein said method further  
5 comprises the step of:

filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application of a  
rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of predefined criteria.

41. (original) The method of Claim 40, wherein said filtering step is performed in at least  
10 one of:

real-time; and  
batch mode.

42. (currently amended) The method of Claim 40, wherein said filtering step further  
15 comprises the step of:

modifying an answer to said question based on at least one of:

predetermined criterion;  
at least one filtering rule;  
consistency with previously answered questions;  
20 consistency with all answered questions; and

consistency with answers of said particular affinity group or combination of said  
affinity groups.

43. (previously presented) The method of claim 42, wherein said modification comprises  
25 at least one of omission of said answer and tagging said user profile as inactive.

44. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the steps of:  
periodically creating a new affinity group; and  
associating at least one user to said new affinity group.

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45. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:  
a user creating a new affinity group.

5 46. (original) The method of Claim 45, further comprising the step of:  
associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

47. (original) The method of Claim 30, wherein said affinity group comprises at least one  
of:

10 profession;  
geographic location;  
compensation;  
compensation range;  
experience;  
15 experience range;  
position; and  
position range.

48. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:  
20 providing a compensation report.

49. (original) The method of Claim 48, said compensation report is constrained by at  
least one of:  
an attribute of said user profile; and  
25 a reporting goal.

50. (original) The method of Claim 49, further comprising the step of:  
weighting said constraint to provide a match score.

30 51. (original) The method of Claim 49, said goal comprising at least one of:  
a desired compensation;

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a desired range of compensation;  
a desired geographic location;  
a desired firm; and  
a desired range of firms.

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52. (original) The method of Claim 49, said step of providing said report, comprising the step of:

matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding matchfield of at least one of:

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an affinity group; and  
a user profile.

53. (original) The method of Claim 52 further comprising the step of:

determining at least one best match from a plurality of possible matches.

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54. (original) The method of Claim 53, further comprising the step of:

arranging matches by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

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55. (original) The method of Claim 52, said step of matching further comprising the steps of:

providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and  
weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

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56. (original) The method of claim 55, said step of matching further comprising the step of:

classifying each match score as one of:  
deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

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57. (original) The method of Claim 49, said goal comprising any of:

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a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

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58. (original) The method of Claim 57, said personal goal comprising at least one of:

compensation;

compensation range;

salary;

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salary range;

geographic location;

position; and

position range.

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59. (original) The method of Claim 57, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

60. (previously presented) The method of Claim 59, wherein said statistical information comprises at least one of:

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average compensation;

average salary;

median compensation;

median salary;

salary percentile;

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standard deviation;

trend;

profile count;

most frequent compensation; and

most frequent salary.

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61. (original) The method of Claim 57, said report resulting from said personal goal providing a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

a plurality of user profiles; and  
an affinity group.

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62. (original) The method of Claim 30, said compensation comprising at least one of:

annual salary;  
monthly salary;  
weekly salary;  
hourly rate;  
bonus;  
tip;  
benefits; and  
vacation time.

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63. (currently amended) An apparatus for compensation surveying and reporting by presenting a tailored series sequence of questions to a user, comprising:

means for accessing a Web site, said Web site being accessible via a network;

means for surveying the user for information pertinent for determination of

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compensation, said means for surveying presenting a plurality of questions from a collection ~~a segment of a sequence~~ of questions to said user, the user answers to said plurality of questions from a collection segment being used, regardless of the order in which the questions are presented, to make a determination of an affinity of said user to one or more affinity groups, wherein each affinity group comprises a plurality of profiles;

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means for creating a profile for said user if a profile does not exist for a said user, otherwise accessing an existing profile for said user, and adding said plurality segment of questions from a collection and corresponding answers to said user profile;

means for storing said user profile; and

means for determining if a corresponding affinity group exists for said user profile

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and, if so, associating said user profile with one or more affinity groups, based on said user's profile questions and corresponding answers; ~~an appropriated affinity group does~~



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~~not exists, then~~ otherwise creating at least one new affinity group, said new affinity group created by associating a plurality of user profiles, that include said user profile with each other, based on answers to questions provided in said user profiles and regardless of the order in which the questions are presented ~~with said new affinity group.~~

5

64. (currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 63, further comprising:

means for presenting at least one particular subsequent question from said collection of questions to said user, the selection of said at least one subsequent question being influenced and dynamically determined by selecting at least one affinity group with ~~to~~ which said user profile is associated best matches.

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65. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein said network comprising at least one of:

a local area network (LAN);

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a wide area network (WAN);

an Intranet;

the Internet; and

the World Wide Web.

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66. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, further comprising:

means for reporting results based on a reporting goal.

67. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 66, said means for reporting further comprising:

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means for matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding matchfield of at least one of:

an affinity group; and

a user profile.

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68. (original) The apparatus of Claim 67, said means for matching further comprising:  
means for classifying each match score as one of:  
deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
5 non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

69. (original) The apparatus of Claim 66, said reporting goal comprising at least one of:  
salary range;  
hourly rate range;  
10 billing rate;  
vacation range;  
commission range;  
stock option packages;  
tips;  
15 benefits comparison; and  
total compensation calculations.

70. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, said affinity group comprising at least one of:  
industry;  
20 job;  
profession;  
geographic location;  
compensation range;  
experience range;  
25 skill, certification;  
responsibility;  
employer name;  
employer type;  
employer size;  
30 employer sales;  
employer business;

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employer product;  
employer service;  
gender;  
age range;  
5 school name;  
degree;  
study major; and  
ethnic background.

10 71. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, said compensation comprising at least one of:

annual salary;  
monthly salary;  
weekly salary;  
daily rate;  
15 hourly rate;  
overtime rate;  
bonus;  
tip;  
benefits;  
20 vacation time;  
stock; and  
stock options.

72. (original) The apparatus of Claim 66, wherein said reporting goal comprises one of:

25 a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs  
pertaining to personal aspirations; and  
an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary  
inputs.

30 73. (original) The apparatus of Claim 72, said personal goal comprising at least one of:  
compensation;

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compensation range;  
salary;  
salary range;  
geographic location;  
5 job position; and  
statistical information.

74. (original) The apparatus of Claim 73, said personal goal in connection with said user profile comprising:

10 likes of said user.

75. (original) The apparatus of Claim 73, said personal goal in connection with said affinity group comprising:

a user profile comprising likes of said user.

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76. (original) The apparatus of Claim 66, wherein said reporting goal provides aggregated information pertaining to a plurality of user profiles.

77. (original) The apparatus of Claim 76, wherein said aggregated information  
20 comprises statistical information.

78. (original) The apparatus of Claim 77, said statistical information comprising at least one of:

average compensation;  
25 average salary;  
median compensation;  
median salary;  
salary percentile;  
standard deviation;  
30 trend;  
profile count;

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most frequent compensation; and  
most frequent salary.

79. (cancelled)

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80. (currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein a question from said collection sequence of questions is associated with a plurality of possible answers.

10 81. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 80, wherein said possible answers are a subset of a plurality of answers, wherein said subset being selected at least in respect of at least one of said user profile, and an affinity group associated with said user profile.

15 82. (original) The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein said user may select at least one answer to said question.

83. (original) The apparatus of Claim 81, said possible answers further comprising:  
an open text.

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84. (original) The apparatus of Claim 83, said open text allowing said user to add a new answer to said possible answers.

25 85. (original) The apparatus of Claim 84, wherein said new answer is used as one of said possible answers when a question is subsequently suggested to a second user.

86. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein a subsequent question is selected for presentation to said user from a plurality of possible questions.

30 87. (original) The apparatus of Claim 86, wherein said selection from a plurality of possible question is tailored to correspond with said user profile.



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88. (original) The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein upon selection of an answer by said user, said user profile is associated with an affinity group.

5 89. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein said means for surveying enable said user to add a new question.

90. (original) The apparatus of Claim 89, wherein said user may add a new answer to said question.

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91. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein said affinity groups are created based on at least a commonality between at least one attribute and at least one corresponding value.

15 92. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for surveying a user with a series sequence of questions tailored to a said user, comprising the steps of:

presenting at least one question from a collection ~~a segment of the sequence~~ of questions to said user, the user answers to said at least one question from a collection of questions segment determining, regardless of the order in which of the questions are

20 presented, an affinity of said user to compensation within one or more affinity groups, wherein each affinity group comprises a plurality of profiles;

receiving answers from said user;

storing said at least one question segment and said answers in a user profile;

determining if a corresponding affinity group exists for said user profile and, if so,

25 associating said user profile with at least one or more affinity groups, based on said user's profile questions and corresponding answers, regardless of the order in which the questions are presented, ~~otherwise if an appropriate affinity group does not exist, then~~

creating at least one new affinity group, said new affinity group created by associating a plurality of user profiles, that include said user profile with each other, based on

30 answers to questions provided in said user profiles and regardless of the order in which the questions are presented ~~with said new affinity group~~;

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filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application of a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of predefined criteria;

modifying an answer if it is inconsistent with at least one of:

said user profile; and

5        said affinity group;

determining an appropriate next question from said collection of questions to be presented to said user, said appropriate question being dynamically determined based on at least ~~one of said matching a particular~~ affinity group or combination of affinity groups to which said user profile is associated by said computer implemented method

10     ~~and an answer to a previously presented question;~~ and

repeating the foregoing steps until a full profile is established.

93. (previously presented) The method of claim 92, further comprising the steps of:

at least periodically checking all user profiles; and

15        attempting to generate at least an affinity group, wherein said affinity group comprises at least a user profile.

94. (original) The method of Claim 92, further comprising the step of:

preparing a report based on at least one of:

20        an attribute of said user profile; and

a reporting goal.

95. (currently amended) The method of Claim 92, wherein said step of optionally filtering said user profile is performed in an off-line mode.

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96. (currently amended) The method of Claim 92, wherein said appropriate next question is determined based on at least one of:

popularity of said question within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

30        a defined relation to said at least one question;

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a most frequently answered question within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and

a most recently answered question within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and

5 in relation to said question.

97. (original) The method of Claim 94, further comprising the step of:

querying any of a database of a plurality of user profiles and a database of a plurality of affinity groups for a statistical report.

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98. (original) The method of Claim 97, wherein said statistical report comprises at least one of:

average compensation;

average salary;

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median compensation;

median salary;

salary percentile;

standard deviation;

trend;

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profile count;

most frequent compensation; and

most frequent salary.

99. (original) The method of Claim 98, further comprising the step of:

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generating said statistical report with at least one of said attributes held constant.

100. (original) The method of Claim 94, said generating step further comprising the step of:

constraining by at least one of:

30

an attribute of said user profile; and

a goal.

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101. (original) The method of Claim 100, wherein said goal comprises at least one of:

- a profile attribute value;
- a range of profile attribute values;
- 5 a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;
- a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;
- a date range, a minimum count of matching profiles;
- a maximum count of matching profiles;
- a question filter;
- 10 an affinity filter; and
- a match score threshold.

102. (original) The method of Claim 100, further comprising the step of:  
weighting said constraint results to provide a match score.

103. (original) The method of Claim 100, further comprising the step of:  
determining a best match from a plurality of possible matches.

104. (original) The method of Claim 103, further comprising the step of:  
20 arranging said match by order of match score, said order being grouped to at  
least two levels of matches, based on said score.

105. (original) The method of Claim 100, said matching step further comprising the  
steps of:

- 25 providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and
- weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

106. (original) The method of Claim 100, said step of matching to said affinity group  
further comprising the step of:

- 30 classifying each match score as one of:
  - deterministic to meeting said goal; and

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non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

107. (original) The method of Claim 100, said goal comprising one of:

- a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs
- 5 pertaining to personal aspirations; and
- an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

108. (original) The method of Claim 107, wherein said aggregated information

10 comprises statistical information.

109. (original) The method of Claim 108, wherein said statistical information comprises at least one of:

- average compensation;
- 15 average salary;
- median compensation;
- median salary;
- salary percentile;
- standard deviation;
- 20 trend;
- profile count;
- most frequent compensation; and
- most frequent salary.

25 110. (original) The method of Claim 107, wherein a report resulting from a personal goal provides a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

- a plurality of user profiles; and
- an affinity group.

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